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To: Randal_Bowman@ios.doi.gov
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FYI

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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

June 29, 2017

The Honorable Ryan K. Zinke
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

The Honorable Wilbur L. Ross, Jr.
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Zinke and Secretary Ross,

I write in response to your request for my comment on the Interior and Commerce Departments' review of the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument, subject to executive orders 13795 and 13792.

The Marianas Trench is an important natural resource with deep cultural meaning for Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands that drives economic development. In January 2009, then-President George W. Bush designated our marine national monument to permanently protect approximately 95,216 square miles of submerged land and territorial waters. Each year, visitors from around the world come to Guam to explore our pristine beaches, world-class diving among coral reefs and colorful tropical fish, and other unique attractions.

Tourism is big business for Guam. According to the Guam Visitors Bureau, the tourism industry accounts for over 50% of our economy, directly responsible for 1 in 3 jobs. 2016 was a record-breaking year for tourism to Guam, with an estimated 1.53 million visitors. In particular, ecotourism to Guam and neighboring islands continues to grow, providing visitors an opportunity to travel to pristine natural areas in an environmentally responsible way. This helps to sustain our communities and exposes visitors to the best of local culture. I expect that your Departments will consider the very significant economic impact that tourism—driven by our natural wonders like the Marianas Trench and world-famous hospitality—has for Guam and the region. An economically vibrant Guam also guarantees high quality of life for the veterans, 12,000 U.S. military service members, and their dependents who call our island home.

President Trump's executive order 13795 requires you to consider "opportunity costs associated with potential energy and mineral exploration and production." I expect this to include the obvious downsides of opening up marine national monuments like the Marianas Trench to offshore drilling, possible spills, and other negative impacts. Identifying underwater resources in deep-water ocean like the Marianas Trench oftentimes requires highly intrusive seismic surveys. While seismic surveys are sometimes necessary for ocean-floor mapping, military readiness, and scientific purposes, they can devastate sensitive species like marine

mammals. As such, I am concerned that the President's executive order and your Departments' review may lead to unnecessary seismic surveys that attempt to inventory offshore oil, gas, and mineral resources likely neither technically feasible to reach nor economically profitable to exploit.

Lastly, your Departments—the Interior Department in particular—have unique working partnerships with insular areas like Guam. President Bush's 2009 proclamation reflects this fact, recognizing the need to support “sustenance, recreational, and traditional indigenous fishing” in the Marianas Trench National Monument. I therefore hope that your Departments will consider suggestions to improve the Marianas Trench's existing management planning process, including any submitted during this public comment period. I also hope that your Departments will recommit to finalizing the management plan without further delay.

Our local communities deserve flexibility to exercise their traditional fishing rights, and I hope that your Departments will seek to address concerns within the current management planning process. President Bush's 2009 proclamation established the Marianas Trench Monument Advisory Council to ensure substantial local input and that the marine national monument is managed to the high degree of stewardship that the people of Guam and the Northern Marianas expect.

Thank you for considering my views. Please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss these issues further, or have your staffs contact mine at: 202-225-1188.

Sincerely,



MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO
Member of Congress

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